



Maricopa County
Animal Care and Control



ANIMAL BITES

PET-OWNER'S LIABILITIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Every year in the United States approximately 800,000 dog bites are severe enough to require medical treatment. Some turn out to be fatal. Approximately 15 percent of all American children are bitten before the age of 13.

YOUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Any dog over the age of three months is required by law to wear a collar or harness with an attached valid, current county license.

Legally, a pet owner whose dog or cat bites someone can be subjected to severe and expensive penalties as follows:

- Damages suffered by the person bitten.
- A current rabies vaccination is **required by law** for dogs. Although optional for cats, it is **highly recommended** that cats be vaccinated for rabies (even indoor cats). An unvaccinated dog that bites a person must be held in quarantine in the county pound or at a veterinary hospital for at least 10 days **at the owner's expense**.
- Whenever an animal bites a person, the incident is required by law to be reported to the county enforcement agency.

PREVENTING YOUR DOG FROM BITING

Taking the following steps will greatly reduce the chances of your dog biting someone:

- Spay or neuter your dog. This will reduce the dog's desire to roam, and to fight with other dogs.
- Socialize your dog. Introduce the dog to different people and situations so it won't be nervous or frightened in social settings.
- Train your dog. This will enable your family to learn to teach the dog manners and be able to safely control it. Attending a class along with other dogs and people will help socialize your dog.
- Don't encourage your dog to be unacceptably aggressive.

AVOIDING DOG BITES:

Dogs are naturally fearful of unfamiliar and what they perceive to be threatening situations.

- Do not attempt to move a dog from the bed, push down on its rump to make it sit, step over a resting dog.
- Do not attempt to take food or toys from a dog.
- Do not ever attempt to break up a dog fight by grabbing the animals. Yell or make loud noises to redirect their attention.

- An injured dog may bite depending on how much pain or fear it has.
- Do not pull the ears or tail, or attempt to hug a sleeping dog.
- Do not attempt to put unwelcome clothing on a dog.
- A mother dog with puppies can become aggressive. They need a safe, quiet space. Visits and interaction should be kept to a minimum.
- Never approach a strange dog, especially if it's tied or confined. If the dog is with a person, even on a leash, ask for permission before approaching the dog.
- Don't pet a dog, even your own, without letting it see or sniff you first.
- Never turn your back and run away from a dog. A dog's natural instinct is to chase and catch you.
- Teach your children to not chase or tease dogs and to avoid dogs they don't know. MCACC offers an *Activity and Learning Book* that contains bite prevention tips geared toward kids. You can obtain this book at any of our care facilities.

If you are approached by a dog that is acting aggressively, follow these steps:

- ☒ Don't scream and/or run.
- ☒ Remain motionless, hands at your sides, avoiding eye contact with the dog.
- ☒ Once the dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until he is out of sight.
- ☒ If the dog does attack, "feed" him your jacket, purse or anything that you can put between yourself and the dog.
- ☒ If you fall or are knocked down, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and remain motionless. Try not to scream, thrash or roll around.

WHAT TO DO IF BITTEN BY A DOG

- ☒ Don't panic. Call 911 immediately.
- ☒ Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- ☒ Call a doctor or visit an emergency clinic.
- ☒ Report the bite to Maricopa County Animal Care & Control, 602-506-7387.